

IOWA WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH 2006

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 36.2° or 0.2° above normal while precipitation totaled 3.26 inches or 1.05 inches greater than normal. This ranks as the 53rd warmest and 14th wettest March among 134 years of state records.

Temperatures. March began with above normal temperatures prevailing for the first 12 days of the month. Glenwood and Shenandoah reached 76° on the 1st while Burlington recorded a 79° high on the 11th. However, below normal readings were the rule every day from the 13th through the 28th. Minimum temperatures dipped into the single digits in a few areas on the 14th, 15th, 17th and 22nd with Mapleton the cold spot for the month with a 2° low on the morning of the 22nd. Above normal temperatures finally returned for the last three days of the month with Glenwood reaching 72° on the 29th and Shenandoah 73° on the 30th.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 2% less than last March and normal. Heating requirements so far this season (since July 2005) are running 1% less than last season and 10% less than normal.

Precipitation. Precipitation was frequent and unseasonably heavy over most of Iowa with only a few locations, mainly in the southwest, failing to exceed normal. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 1.49 inches at Randolph to 6.30 inches at Mount Pleasant. The Mount Pleasant total set a March record for that location (old record 6.10 inches in 1990 among 125 years of records). Wapello also set a March record with 6.02 inches (old record 5.91 inches in 1951 among 86 years of records). There were statewide precipitation events on the 5th, 7th, 8th, 12th-13th, 27th and 30th. The storm of the 5th brought 3 to 5 inches of snow to about the northeast one-third of the state with a maximum amount of 8.5 inches reported at Clermont. Rainfall exceeded an inch across east central Iowa on the 8th with 2.00 inches reported at the Cedar Rapids Airport. Heavy snow fell across extreme northwestern Iowa on the 12th-13th and was accompanied by strong winds. Spirit Lake reported 9 inches of wind driven snow while locally heavy rain fell across southeast Iowa where Mount Pleasant and LeClaire recorded 3.00 inches. The month's largest snow event started in western Iowa on the 19th and slowly spread across central and southern Iowa through the 21st. Snowfall amounts of up to 13 inches were reported in Woodbury County (mainly on the 20th) while the northeast one-third of Iowa failed to receive any precipitation during this event. Finally, the month's largest precipitation event came on the 30th. All reporting points in the state recorded at least one-third of an inch of rain while Mason City recorded the most with 2.40 inches during this late month storm.

Severe Weather. The 2006 severe weather season got off to a fast start with four events recorded during March. The first event produced large hail in 6 far western Iowa counties on the 7th. The next day large hail was reported from 19 counties, mostly in central and south central portions of the state. Yet another event on the 12th yielded severe weather reports from 20 counties, mostly for hail, and mainly across the southeast one-quarter of Iowa. Finally, the month's biggest event came on the 30th when high winds, along with a few reports of large hail, were reported from 38 counties across western and central Iowa.

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